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ABSTRACT

Intended for employers, human resource staff, and adult educators, this digest addresses the purposes of career development programs in the workplace and describes the components of such programs. In the first section, the term career development is defined and labeled as just one component of organizations' human resource management. Eight factors that influence the need for career development are listed. The next section describes each step of the management cycle and states that the steps correspond to career development strategies that help both manager and employee maximize career growth. The next section discusses three distinct phases of the career development process (staffing and orientation, evaluation, and development) from which an employer can choose strategies to create a customized career development system. Guidelines for designing and implementing a career development system are presented in the final section. The digest concludes with four references. (CML)

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CAREER DEVELOPMENT IN THE WORKPLACE

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ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult,

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Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education

CAREER DEVELOPMENT IN THE WORKPLACE

Recent expansion of work-based career development programs has resulted in a larger literature base. Because career development is increasingly regarded as the shared responsibility of employee and employer, the importance of this topic is likely to grow. Of interest to employers, human resource staff, and adult educators, this ERIC Digest discusses the purposes of career development programs in the workplace and describes the components of such programs. Guidelines for the creation of an organizational career development program are presented.

What Is Career Development?

Career development refers to "the outcomes of actions on career plans as viewed from both individual and organizational perspectives" (Gutteridge 1986, p. 52). The outcomes desired by organizations include achieving the best match between people and jobs. Individuals' desired outcomes range from status to job flexibility to monetary rewards, depending upon the situation.

Career development is just one component of human resource management in organizations. Others include control and evaluation, organizational design, and human resource planning (Gutteridge 1986).

Why Is Career Development Necessary?

Both external and internal factors influence the need for career development. Among these factors, Slavenski and Buckner (1988) list the following:

- o The need to identify and forecast personnel needs
- o Social and demographic trends
- o The changing nature of work
- o Changing types of jobs
- o Equity and a multicultural work force
- o Worker productivity
- o Technological change and decreasing advancement opportunities
- o Organizational philosophies

Employers are motivated to establish career development programs because such programs are seen as an effective response to various personnel problems, because top managers prefer to promote existing employees and to ensure a good fit between the work and the worker, and because employees have expressed interest in career development as a benefit (Gutteridge 1986). Above all, "most organizations adopt career development programs in response to pragmatic human resource concerns and because they believe it will help ensure a continued supply of qualified, talented personnel" (Gutteridge 1986, p. 58).

What Is the Management Cycle?

The management cycle provides a framework for career development practice. Each of the steps in the management cycle corresponds to career development strategies that help both manager and employee maximize career growth (Slavenski and Buckner 1988). These steps, with appropriate career development tasks, are the following:

Hire or promote. Strategies at this phase focus on assessing job candidates and hiring or promoting the person whose skills and interests best match the job.

Orient or communicate. This step involves making known to the new employee what is expected, what the organizational culture is like, and what the value systems are. Some companies establish mentoring programs to assist with this task.

Observe performance. Employee performance is measured with reference to expectations. Feedback is provided.

Manage performance. Employees are rewarded for their strengths. Positive aspects of performance are emphasized.

Develop employee. Various tools can be used for staff development, including inservice training, career planning workshops, and counseling and assessment services. At this stage, managers may place employees with high potential on the "fast track."

Make personnel selection decisions. As organizational needs arise, potential employees are recruited and the cycle starts again with a job match.

What Are the Components of a Career Development Program?

Slavenski and Buckner (1988) divide the career development process into three distinct phases: (1) staffing and orientation, (2) evaluation, and (3) development. Each of these phases is composed of strategies from which the employer may choose to create a customized career development system.

The **staffing and orientation phase** is composed of providing career information to the job candidate (whether internal or external) and using selection techniques to match potential workers with the right job. The type of career information provided may include knowledge of jobs within the organization and possible career paths for the employee. Selection techniques that are used to match employee and employment opportunity include assessment center exercises and job posting systems even for positions that are to be filled internally (a form of self-selection).

The next phase is the **evaluating phase.** Two key tasks in this phase are performance review and succession planning. The purpose of performance review, from a career development perspective, is to provide feedback to employees on their skills and knowledge, both to increase

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job satisfaction and to help them prepare for their next job. Succession planning, at the initiative of the employer, links information from and about individual employees to the human resource needs of the organization.

During the **developing phase,** more visible career development strategies are employed. Tools used during this phase include career discussions between employee and supervisor, career resource centers, self-assessment and career counseling, and career planning workshops.

Career discussions between employee and supervisor form an integral part of any career development system. Training supervisors for their career discussion role is necessary for success; even more important and difficult is convincing supervisors to apply that training.

Career resource centers have been found to be effective if they support a larger career development system. According to Slavenski and Buckner, employees view career resource centers as a concrete symbol of company support of career development and openness of information.

Although career counseling does exist in organizations, self-assessment is a more common tool. A trend appears to be the formal incorporation of career counseling into employee assistance programs, as career issues become more complex. Career workbooks and similar activities are currently among the most popular self-assessment tools.

Recent policy trends have guided the design and use of career development workshops. Among the most important are the following trends:

- o Emphasis on teaching employees to feel more power
- o Less encouragement for employees to explore other career fields; focus on employees experiencing success in their current jobs
- o Emphasis on life career planning

For example, IBM's career planning workshop focuses on the interests, skills, and contributions inherent in the individual's current job. Employees study their jobs' components and learn how to make the work more challenging. In addition, participants learn how jobs evolve from business needs (Bardsley 1987).

How Is a Career Development Program Established?

The first step in establishing career development in the workplace is the assessment of organizational needs and the needs of individual employees. Several ready-made instruments exist to help organizations with this step, including "What's Your Career Development Quotient?" by Farren, Kaye, and Leibowitz and the "Career Development Opportunity Inventory" by Goldner, Hutcheson, and Otte. These instruments assist the organization with determining what is already working in career development and what is needed (Slavenski and Buckner 1988).

Leibowitz, Farren, and Kaye (1985) present a model for designing and implementing a career development system. Their guidelines include the following:

- o State specifics
- o Tie the program to overall human resource development
- o Tailor the program to the culture
- o Build from a conceptual base
- o Plan long-term approaches, short-term payoff
- o Design multiple approaches
- o Co-design and manage the project
- o Ensure top management support
- o Publicize accomplishments

Evaluating the system and improving it based on those evaluations are also important steps in the creation process. Like employee career growth, program growth should be continual.

Slavenski and Buckner (1988) conclude their paper with a list of recommendations garnered from the literature and from their own experiences with career development in the workplace. Among their recommendations for persons designing and implementing career development are the following:

- o Link new programs to other parts of the career development system
- o Design the program in terms of the specific organizational culture
- o Think of career development as a process, not a program
- o Involve line management

In summary, career development is now viewed as the shared responsibility of employee and employer. Employers are implementing career development in order to match work and workers for optimal productivity. Various tools exist that organizations can use as part of their career development system. Employers wishing to develop such a system should first assess organizational needs and then decide which components of career development systems would work best in their culture. Finally, it is important to evaluate and continue to improve the career development system.

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